

Harold Frederic as a Pioneer Realist

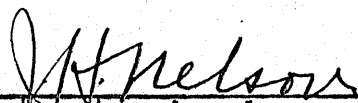
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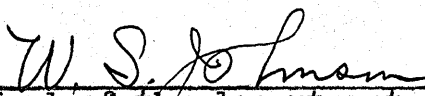
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## PREFACE

This monograph is meant to serve as an appreciation of the fourteen volumes which constitute Harold Frederic's literary works, as a guide to the reading and enjoyment of Harold Frederic, and finally as an indication of Frederic's work as a pioneer American realist.

The preparation of the monograph encountered what seemed at the outset insuperable difficulties. But through the kindness of Director Earl N. Manchester of the University of Kansas libraries several of Frederic's volumes now out of print were borrowed, and the study proceeded.

To Dr. John Herbert Nelson and to Dr. Josephine May Burnham of the Department of English at the University of Kansas, whose patience and assistance have made this study not only profitable but enjoyable, I express my sincere appreciation.

D.H.H.

July 14, 1928.

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## Harold Frederic as a Pioneer Realist

### Introductory Note

As a novelist Harold Frederic (1856-1898) is little known. While thousands of readers have enjoyed IN The Valley, his delightful romance of the French and Indian War in America, and The Damnation of Theron Ware, his vigorous study of the American bourgeoisie, Harold Frederic's works as a whole are not generally known to the American public. That this is true largely because of the contemporary reader's lack of a guide to what Harold Frederic has written and not because of the character of his writing itself is the belief which encouraged this study.

Though Harold Frederic took up novel-writing as a recreation, he published between the years 1887 and 1898 nine readable novels, besides several collections of interesting short stories. Professor Pattee, reviewing Harold Frederic's work,\* describes Frederic as a "meteor of brilliance" and adds, "Undoubtedly he possessed the rare gift of story-telling, and had he, like Crawford, devoted himself wholly to the art, he might have done work to compare with any written during the period." With this praise in mind the writer read very carefully and with interest all of Harold Frederic's literary

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\*Pattee, Fred L. History of American Literature Since 1870,  
p. 401.



products, hoping to find therein a justification of Professor Pattee's estimate. In a measure greater than at the outset expected, he succeeded. It is therefore the purpose of this study to consider each of Harold Frederic's fourteen volumes in the light of the method which produced them, to compare them incidentally with other works of their class, and finally after pointing out Harold Frederic's work as a pioneer realist, to suggest his place in American literature.

## Chapter I

### Harold Frederic Himself

Unfortunately most of the details of Harold Frederic's life are not available for publication, but this brief sketch\* may serve to give at least an impression of the man who deserves more credit for his work in the field of letters than his admirers have hitherto accorded him. Born August 19, 1856, at Utica, New York, Harold Frederic spent his boyhood in northern New York, becoming familiar with life on the farm and being educated in the Utica public schools. Northern New York being about the time of the Civil War a region of rich farms, of conservative ideas, and of strong, indigenous types of men, it provided the young Frederic with much social information which he later embodied in his novels. After his school days he turned to journalism and, working his way up from reporter, became editor of the Albany Journal. This journalistic training taught him to make the most of time and opportunity, and he contrived to find leisure enough to attempt two or three stories. Continuing in journalism at Utica, at Albany, and at New York City, he became in 1884 chief foreign correspondent for the New York Times. With headquarters in London he held this position until his death at Henly, Oxfordshire, England, October 19, 1898.

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\*Based upon the article on Harold Frederic in the Encyclopedia Americana and upon Carl Van Doren's appraisal in The American Novel.

A big man with a dominating voice, kind, witty, interested in everything, Harold Frederic commanded attention hour after hour as he talked with friends and acquaintances. And it is said that he spoke the language of his pen.\*

His ability as a talker gained him many friends and much influence, but it is as a writer that Harold Frederic is remembered. A student of life about him, possessing dramatic sense and a saving grace of humor, he wrote during the years from 1887 to 1898 fourteen volumes--novels, romances, short stories, and histories. In his novels, which are often photographic and minute in detail, he liked to deal with types of that mixed population peculiar to the farming valleys of central New York--German, Irish, and American--bringing out by contrast their marked social and individual traits. His later novels, with London as a background, are supplements to the realism of the New York series and pleasing human documents--always with definite plots, humor, dramatic development, and a primary interest in character.

All those who know Harold Frederic at all agree that his strongest work is The Damnation of Theron Ware, published in 1896. And of all the strong passages in Theron Ware, the one which I feel gives the best general impression of Harold Frederic's powers is the description of the first meeting of

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\*Mrs. Kate Forman, owner of the March Hares copyright.

Theron Ware and Celia Madden--of "the last rite."

This quotation, though long, I include here not only because it constitutes a unit of composition, but also because it impresses me as the best that Harold Frederic did, illustrates his favorite method of realism, and gives a good sample of his style:

Walking homeward briskly now, with his eyes on the sidewalk and his mind all agog with crowding suggestions for the new work, and impatience to be at it, he (Theron) came abruptly upon a group of men and boys who occupied the whole path, and were moving forward so noiselessly that he had not heard them coming. He almost ran into the leader of this little procession, and began a stammering apology, the final words of which were left unspoken so solemnly heedless of him and his talk were all the faces he saw.

In the centre of the group were four workingmen, bearing between them an extemporized litter of two poles and a blanket hastily secured across them with spikes. Most of what this litter held was covered by another blanket, rounded in coarse folds over a shapeless bulk. From beneath its farther end protruded a big broom-like black beard, thrown upward at such an angle as to hide everything beyond to those in front. The tall young minister, stepping aside and standing tip-toe, could see sloping downward behind this hedge of beard a pinched and chalk-like face, with wide-open, staring eyes. Its lips, of a dull lilac hue, were moving ceaselessly, and made a dry, clicking sound.

Theron instinctively joined himself to those who followed the litter,--a motley dozen of street idlers, chiefly boys. One of these in whispers explained to him that the man was one of Jerry Madden's workmen in the wagon-shops, who had been employed to trim an elm-tree in front of his employer's house, and, being unused to such work, had fallen from the top and broken all his bones.

They would have cared for him at Madden's house, but he insisted upon being taken home. His name was MacEvoy, and he was Joey MacEvoy's father, and likewise Jim's and Hughey's and Martin's. After a pause the lad, a bright-eyed, freckled, barefooted wee Irishman, volunteered the further information that his big brother had run to bring "Father Forbess," on the chance that he might be in time to administer "extry munction."

The way of the silent little procession led through back streets--where women hanging up clothes in the yards hurried to the gates, their aprons full of clothes-pins, to stare open-mouthed at the passers-by--and came to a halt at last in an irregular and muddy lane, before one of a half dozen shanties reared among the ash-heaps and debris of the town's most bedraggled outskirts.

A stout, middle-aged, red-armed woman, already warned by some messenger of calamity, stood waiting on the roadside bank. There were whimpering children clinging to her skirts, and a surrounding cluster of women of the neighborhood, some of the more elderly of whom, shrivelled little crones in tidy caps, and with their aprons to their eyes, were beginning in a low-murmured minor the wail which presently should rise into the keen of death. Mrs. MacEvoy herself made no moan, and her broad ruddy face was stern in expression rather than sorrowful. When the litter stopped beside her, she laid a hand for an instant on her husband's wet brow, and looked--one could have sworn impassively--into his staring eyes. Then, still without a word, she waved the bearers toward the door, and led the way herself.

Theron, somewhat wonderingly, found himself, a minute later, inside a dark and ill-smelling room, the air of which was humid with the steam from a boiler of clothes on the stove, and not in other ways improved by the presence of a jostling score of women, all straining their gaze upon the open door of the only other apartment,--the bed-chamber. Through this they could see the workmen laying MacEvoy on the bed, and standing awkwardly about thereafter, getting in the way of the wife and old Maggie Quirk as they strove to remove the garments from his crushed limbs. As the neighbors watched

what could be seen of these proceedings, they whispered among themselves eulogies of the injured man's industry and good temper, his habit of bringing his money home to his wife, and the way he kept his Father Mathew pledge and attended to his religious duties. They admitted freely that, by the light of his example, their own husbands and sons left much to be desired, and from this wandered easily off into domestic digressions of their own. But all the while their eyes were bent upon the bedroom door; and Theron made out, after he had grown accustomed to the gloom and the smell, that many of them were telling their beads even while they kept the muttered conversation alive. None of them paid any attention to him, or seemed to regard his presence there as unusual.

Presently he saw enter through the sunlit street doorway a person of a different class. The bright light shone for a passing instant upon a fashionable, flowered hat, and upon some remarkably brilliant red hair beneath it. In another moment there had edged along through the throng, to almost within touch of him, a tall young woman, the owner of this hat and wonderful hair. She was clad in light and pleasing spring attire, and carried a parasol with a long oxidized silver handle of a quaint pattern. She looked at him, and he saw that her face was a lengthened oval, with a luminous rose-tinted skin, full red lips, and big brown, frank eyes with heavy auburn lashes. She made a grave little inclination of her head toward him, and he bowed in response. Since her arrival he noted, the chattering of the others had entirely ceased.

"I followed the others in, in the hope that I might be of some assistance," he ventured to explain to her in a low murmur, feeling that at last here was some one to whom an explanation of his presence in this Romish house was due. "I hope they won't feel that I have intruded."

She nodded her head as if she quite understood. "They'll take the will for the deed," she whispered back. "Father Forbes will be here in a minute. Do you know is it too late?"

Even as she spoke, the outer doorway was darkened by the commanding bulk of a newcomer's figure. The flash of a silk hat, and the deferential way in which the assembled neighbors fell back to clear a passage, made his identity clear. Theron felt his blood tingle in an unaccustomed way as this priest of a strange church advanced across the room,--a broad-shouldered, portly man of more than middle height, with a shapely, strong-lined face of almost waxen pallor, and a firm, commanding tread. He carried in his hands, besides his hat, a small leather-bound case. To this and to him the women courtesied and bowed their heads as he passed.

"Come with me," whispered the tall girl with the parasol to Theron; and he found himself pushing along in her wake until they intercepted the priest just outside the bedroom door. She touched Father Forbes on the arm.

"Just to tell you that I am here," she said. The priest nodded with a grave face, and passed into the other room. In a minute or two the workmen, Mrs. MacEvoy, and her helper came out, and the door was shut behind them.

"He is making his confession," explained the young lady. "Stay here for a minute."

She moved over to where the woman of the house stood, glum-faced and tearless, and whispered something to her. A confused movement among the crowd followed, and out of it presently resulted a small table, covered with a white cloth, and bearing on it two unlighted candles, a basin of water, and a spoon, which was brought forward and placed in readiness before the closed door. Some of those nearest this cleared space were kneeling now, and murmuring a low buzz of prayer to the click of beads on their rosaries.

The door opened, and Theron saw the priest standing in the doorway with an uplifted hand. He wore now a surplice, with a purple band over his shoulders, and on his pale face there shone a tranquil and tender light.

One of the workmen fetched from the stove a brand, lighted the two candles, and bore the table with its contents into the bedroom. The young woman plucked Theron's sleeve, and he dumbly followed her into the chamber of death, making one of the group of a dozen, headed by Mrs. MacEvoy and her children, which filled the little room, and overflowed now outward to the street door. He found himself bowing with the others to receive the sprinkled holy water from the priest's white fingers; kneeling with the others for the prayers; following in impressed silence with the others the strange ceremonial by which the priest traced crosses of holy oil with his thumb upon the eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands, and feet of the dying man, wiping off the oil with a piece of cotton-batting each time after he had repeated the invocation to forgiveness for that particular sense. But most of all he was moved by the rich, novel sound of the Latin as the priest rolled it forth in the Asperges me, Domine, and Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus, with its soft Continental vowels and liquid R's. It seemed to him that he had never really heard Latin before. Then the astonishing young woman with the red hair declaimed the Confiteor, vigorously and with a resonant distinctness of enunciation. It was a different Latin, harsher and more sonorous; and while it still dominated the murmured undertone of the other's prayers, the last moment came.

Theron had stood face to face with death at many other bedsides; no other final scene had stirred him like this. It must have been the girl's Latin chant, with its clanging reiteration of the great names, -- beatum Michaellem Archangelum, beatum Joannem Baptistam, sanctos Apostolos Petrum et Paulum, -- invoked with such proud confidence in this squalid little shanty, which so strangely affected him.

He came out with the others at last, -- the candles and the folded hands over the crucifix left behind, -- and walked as one in a dream.

Even by the time that he had gained the outer doorway, and stood blinking at the bright light and filling his lungs with honest air once more, it had begun to seem incredible to him that he had seen and done all this.



At the time Harold Frederic wrote the passage just quoted, he was in his fortieth year. His first book, Seth's Brother's Wife, a realistic study of farm life in northern New York, appeared in 1887, nine years earlier. His last book, The Market Place, showing a marked advance in his use of realism and the development of a crude but admirable "Bull" on the London board of trade, was written in 1898.

Between these two dates, 1887 and 1898, Harold Frederic wrote the two histories, the three collections of short stories, and the nine novels which constitute his literary works. The twelve years of his writing, viewed in the light of his treatment of materials, may be divided into three more or less definite periods--the years of experimentation (1887-1893), during which time Frederic tried first realism and then historical romance; the period of his decided turning to realism (1893-1896), at which time he was swayed by the vigor of the French realists; and the period of his chief realistic products (1896-1898), the time at which he soared beyond his American contemporaries in the search after truth and in the vigor of his manner of presentation. It will be the method of this study, therefore, to consider each of Harold Frederic's works as it falls in chronological order into one of the three periods described above and to discuss his importance as a leader in realism among later American novelists.

## Chapter II

### The Years of Experimentation (1887-1892)

#### 1. Seth's Brother's Wife (1887)

In 1887--a year after the publication of Little Lord Fauntleroy and coincident with the appearance of Looking Backward, 2000 A.D. and of Crawford's Saracinesca--Harold Frederic, then in his thirty-first year, and seeking an escape from the pressure of his work as the London Correspondent of the New York Times, wrote his first book, Seth's Brother's Wife. A novel of New York farm life it is, as Pattee declares, "garland-like in its depressing realism."<sup>\*</sup>

But a good deal more may be said of Seth's Brother's Wife. It is truly a novel in the strict sense of the word because it emphasizes in character contrasts the development of character instead of parading incidents or action, and it prys below the superficial crust of life to examine the substantial. In doing this it exhibits a definite ethical intention, though without argument and the personal intrusions which we observe in Thackeray. A sane photographer of life as he sees it--and his perceptive powers are keen--Harold Frederic in Seth's Brother's Wife is still a man of this world only, as he is in all his works. There is nowhere in his writing anything which suggests a philosophy of "the life to come"--a nothing mystical, nothing potently symbolic, nothing really profound,

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<sup>\*</sup>Pattee, F.L. A History of American Literature Since 1870, p.401.

though much that is serious. Coupled, as it is, with the moral canon that it is not good for a man to fall in love with another man's wife--especially if the other man is your brother--Seth's Brother's Wife is a vigorous, realistic study of manners. And it is this study of manners that carries the reader through the book.

Farm life in northern New York, near Tecumseh, with its old English domesticity, its servants and farm hands, its family pride and family quarrels, its neighborly gossips, its zeal for place in politics, its love affairs high and low--this is the background of Seth's Brother's Wife, a family feud story told with penetrating humor in the characteristic dialect of rural New York. Reared on a farm in northern New York, and passionately fond of country life, Frederic quite naturally makes his native state the setting for not only the first three of his novels but also of many of his stories.

In the plot of Seth's Brother's Wife there is, as always in Frederic, a definite, compact design, with sane action, real dialogue, convincing characters, humor, and suspense. The story shows how Albert Fairchild, a well-to-do lawyer and successful politician, errs in bringing Isabel, his beautiful, coquettish wife, "who will always be popular with people who are not married to her," to the Fairchild country estate, which he has recently inherited. He errs, first, because Isabel dislikes country life and does not love him, and second, be-

cause his youngest brother, Seth, is weak enough to desert Annie, the country girl whom he loves, and succumb to Isabel's encouragement. In the end, however, after Milton Squires, a hired hand, who wants the sixteen thousand dollars which Albert at this time carries on his person, murders Albert, Isabel disgusts Seth by believing that he murdered Albert so that he could marry her. Seth then goes back to Annie, and Isabel marries Richard Ansdelle, her former husband's rival in politics.

Though Frederic is always careful to design a compact and definite plot, it is obvious from a mere glance at the titles of his works that his chief interest lay in character. Seth's Brother's Wife, The Lawton Girl, and The Return of The O Mahony, to select titles from his early works only, serve to illustrate this fact. In Seth's Brother's Wife, Isabel Fairchild, the title character, though a convincing type, is a simple conception of one or two emotions which invariably activate her in one direction easily foretold--the selfish gratification of her sensual whims. Seth Fairchild, young, handsome, appreciative, but still dependent and putty-willed, contrasts strikingly with his older brother Albert, the confident, shrewd, but treacherous man of affairs. These three characters, as well as their minor associates, are static, a shade artificial and somewhat overdrawn to emphasize

central traits, never changing, either for better or for worse. And it may be added here that Frederic's interest lay, not in character development, but in character contrasts.

Essentially journalistic in style, Seth's Brother's Wife is painstakingly realistic in method. With a vocabulary that suggests a reading of the classics, with an ease that pleases the fancy, and with a raciness that propels our reading, Frederic photographs minutely, in accordance with the practice of realism as he found it, the lives and homes of the farmers of northern New York, ever avoiding the ugly, the uncouth, and the sordid. In the kitchen we see the butter come, and smell the bread baking. In the parlor we see the figures of the wall paper, "the never-failing photograph album," and "those huge pink shells on the mantel shelf, without which no rural home used to be complete."\* In the garden we not only smell the fragrance of the flowers, but, combined with that, we live with the people enjoying it. And the dialect which nearly all the characters (except Isabel Fairchild) speak heightens the rusticity of the pictures. All in all, Seth's Brother's Wife is a promise of bigger things.

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\*Scribners, 1887, Vol. 2, p. 532.

## 2. The Lawton Girl (1890)

As in Seth's Brother's Wife, we find in The Lawton Girl--published in 1890--a vivid picture of New York village life and a definite ethical intention. How hard it is--or how almost impossible it is to live down a violation of one of the commandments is the essential truth which Frederic seeks to establish. Jessica Lawton's struggle with the disgrace of fornication, her years of penance, and her final sacrifice make one thing of the story of Hester Prynne.

But the similarity to The Scarlet Letter stops here. Frederic upholds the double standard of morality and makes the woman pay. To be sure, Jessica Lawton wins the author's sympathy, but there is nothing in the scheme of things which will condemn and punish the man. Horace Boyce experiences none of the pain which gnaws at the heart of Arthur Dimmesdale.

A careful student of the life about him, Frederic in The Lawton Girl, and in many of his novels, pictures the small villages of central New York. In The Lawton Girl Thessaly, New York, described as a typical American village, is just emerging into a city. The intolerance and prudishness of the villagers, emphasized by their hostile attitude toward the girl who had gone wrong and toward the struggle which the youth of the village made for a good time, make for a social atmosphere as true to life then as it is in some of our villages today.

Realistic as Frederic's backgrounds are, his plots, always of a definite design, are still more realistic. The Lawton Girl is a fine example of compact, closely knitted action. Frederic seems to have learned early the art of advancing the action through conversation, for much of even the gossip of the villagers in Thessaly is actually essential to the development of his plot.

As the story opens the Ministers--wealthy Mrs. Minister and her beautiful daughter Kate--Horace Boyce, and Jessica Lawton return to Thessaly, New York, on the same train. Jessica, who had abandoned her native village five years trying to live down the disgrace of having an illegitimate son by Horace, sets up a millinery shop and establishes a house of wholesome amusement for the factory girls of Thessaly; and Horace, who has been touring Europe, enters into a law partnership with Reuben Tracy. Both of these young people are successful in their immediate undertakings.

As time runs on Horace, ignoring Jessica, seeks to marry Kate Minister. But Jessica brings her little son, named Horace after his father, to Thessaly and prevents the marriage. The senior Horace then joins Schyler Tenney, a hardware merchant, and Judge Wendover, a New York financier, in a plan to gain control of the Minister estate, Mr. Minister having been dead a few years and his only son having died of drink in early youth.

Kate Minister now appeals to Reuben Tracy, Horace's partner, for help. Tracy dissolves the partnership and collects evidence against Horace.

Later foreign workmen at the Minister Iron mills underbid the Thessaly workers, who immediately threaten the Ministers. Jessica hears of the plans of the Thessaly workers, drives a sleigh with the drunken Squire Gedney to Tracy's old home in the country, informs Tracy of the plot, and faints. But Jessica's illness--she has been suffering from a severe cold on her lungs--does not prevent her gaining from the drunken Squire possession of the papers which incriminate Horace, whom she still loves.

Tracy hurries to the Minister mill--the irate workers are trying to burn it--and makes a speech which gives him not only control of the situation but also of Kate Minister's heart.

Jessica returns to Thessaly, suffers a hemorrhage of the lungs, and then feebly fights her way to the Boyce home. General Boyce, Horace's father, puts her to bed and calls Dr. Lester, the physician who attended Jessica at the time her baby was born. Dr. Lester tells Horace, who pretends to be surprised, of the baby; Horace kisses Jessica and promises to care for their child; and Jessica, with Tracy's promise not to prosecute Horace and with the cry, "I have lived it (her disgrace) down," dies, a smile on her lips.



Though his plots are always well-conceived, definite, and entertaining, still Frederic's plot in The Lawton Girl--as in most of his other works--shows that his primary interest lay in character. With an exceptional talent for characterization, he delights in putting one character against another--quick against slow, keen against stupid, good against bad. And we follow these characters with interest and much illumination of human nature.

Jessica Lawton, the title character, develops into a really fine woman. As a girl, she had succumbed to a bad environment, but, like Hester Prynne, she capitalizes her mistake as an example to others and makes service to the girls of her class her sole ambition. Of mixed evil and good, kind, loving, penitent, unselfish, Jessica Lawton wins our sympathy as well as that of her associates.

Horace Boyce is a typical example of careless, conceited youth. He is consistently proud, designing, selfish. These qualities seem genuine and convincing because Horace himself is not conscious of them. Only at Jessica's death does pride give way to humility.

The other characters--Kate Minister, a typical rich girl whose virtues drown her faults; greedy, unscrupulous Tenney; and the slow, honest Tracy--are incidental.

The main qualities of style portrayed in The Lawton Girl are humor and pathos. What humor there is, is of such a depth that the reader must be alert to catch it. But anger, hate, sorrow, love--the emotions which crowd Jessica's heart--readily command our sympathies.

### 3. In The Valley (1891)

After two fairly successful efforts in the field of realism Frederic turned to the historical romance, which, says Mr. Carl Van Doren, "during the later years of the nineteenth century in the United States, contended for a time successfully, with the prevailing vogue of realism."

The aim which permeates In The Valley seems to be a portrayal of the conflict among the beliefs of the Dutch, German, and English colonial settlers in the Mohawk Valley of New York. "The book adheres to the New York tradition, early set down in Irving and Cooper, of respect for Dutch prudence, suspicion of British perfidy, and active prejudice against all New Englanders, particularly those from Connecticut."\* How each of the three classes looked down upon and hated the other two, how this hatred fanned the flame of the Revolutionary War in the Mohawk Valley, how the sturdy qualities of the people of the valley and the part they played in the war affected the history of our country--these, embedded in a compact and dramatic romance, are Frederic's chief interests.

The story pictures vividly the Mohawk Valley of New York just before and during the Revolutionary War. We see the valley itself, read the thoughts and feelings of the heterogeneous nationalities who peopled it, and fight the battles

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\*Carl Van Doren: "Harold Frederic," in The Encyclopedia Americana.

they fought. We live as landed gentlemen with faithful black slaves in homes of rare size and beauty. In short, we encompass colonial life in New York, with all its hazards, during the years 1857 to 1777.

In this life we take the sides of the Whigs against the Tories in the swift action of the war and follow our hero through the scenes of a compact, romantic, and highly dramatic plot. The story, boldly told in the first person by the stolid Dutch hero, Major Douw Mauverensen, at first flags. But the latter part of the book is packed with action narrated in a stirring manner. The rush and crash of war, with its tears, its suffering, and its love, make a story which reminds one, in point of atmosphere, of The Spy. A long tale with hair-raising titles to its chapters, it suggests something of the melodramatic or "big bow-wow" style of Scott.

Though Mr. Van Doren rightly declares that in his Mohawk Valley romance Frederic threw off "the customary tinsel of archaisms and pretensions, and is not always sentimental," it must be said here that the "prophetically spare and terse" romance of The Mohawk Valley mounts to a ludicrously sentimental level a hundred pages before its fitting climax at Orishany. Here are a few words from page 332:

"I came to you instead," my dear girl said, trying to smile, yet with a quivering lip; "I could not have slept, I could not have borne to live almost, it seems, if I had let you ride off without a word, without a sign."

Then with a sudden deep outburst of anguish, moaning piteously, "must you truly go?" she came, nay, almost fell into my arms, burying her face on my shoulder and weeping violently."

Such sentiment as this makes one think of the man "who considerably raised the price of pocket handkerchiefs in Britain."

Now let us see what major Douw Mauverensen has to say about his life in the Mohawk Valley.

As a boy of eight, he says, a Mr. Stewart, an Englishman of aristocratic propensities, adopts him. Soon afterwards Tony Cross, an old friend of Mr. Stewart's who had married the girl Mr. Stewart loved, brings Daisy, a two year-old baby girl, to Mr. Stewart's home. Because Douw immediately loves her, Mr. Stewart adopts Daisy, an orphan of German parentage, against the protests of a boy Phillip, who is Mr. Cross's youngest son. Phillip and Douw at this early age become rivals for Daisy's favor.

Years pass. An inevitable triangle, the three sides of which are a beautiful golden-haired girl, a slow-witted but honest Dutch boy, and a clever young British officer, appears.

The girl falls in with coquettish Lady Berenicia Cross, the new Mrs. Tony Cross and step-mother to Phillip, becomes

disgusted with Douw's stolidity, and marries Phillip. Douw goes to Albany in the employ of Mrs. Cross. But Daisy's marriage proves to be an unhappy one, for Phillip is a drunkard.

Then the Revolutionary War begins. After four years Douw becomes an officer. Phillip deserts Daisy. A letter to Douw from his strong-willed mother encourages Douw to go home. There, he hears that Phillip and the Mohawk Tories are leading the Iroquois Indians upon his people, the Whigs. Under General Herkimer the Whigs and Tories meet at Orishany. All the Mohawk men except four hundred are killed. After a heavy storm Douw and some friendly Oneida Indians pursue the Tories. They meet an old friend of Douw's, Enoch Wade. Later Enoch wounds Phillip Cross, and Douw decides to take him to the Cross home, Cairncross, secretly by water.

After six days they reach the steep cliff upon which Cairncross stands. It was over this cliff that Phillip had once knocked Tulp, Douw's negro, who since his fall has been affected mentally.

Douw leaves Phillip on the cliff and goes for help. He meets Daisy, whom he has always loved and who now shows she loves him. As they follow the slaves down after Phillip they hear a horrible scream. Enoch Wade tells them that Tulp pushed Phillip over the cliff and then followed him. But the cloud of this catastrophe soon passes. Daisy, Douw, and Mr. Stewart go to Albany. There Douw and Daisy are married. After a few years they are blessed with two sons, the second of whom they call Phillip.

As in most romances, the characters of In The Valley, though they act naturally and under sufficient motives, are types rather than individuals. Stolid but honest Dauw, sweet but vain Daisy, kind but dogmatic Mr. Stewart, and attractive but weak Phillip--all are static characters, emotionalized now by patriotism or class prejudice and then by grief or love.

In The Valley is told in the first person. Although melodramatic, it is a fine example of the racy, vigorous style which characterizes Frederic. Impressive, vivid descriptions abound. This is the picture of Phillip Cross after the battle: "There, half-stretched on the wet, blood-stained grass, panting with the exertion of raising himself on his elbow, and looking me square in the face with distended eyes, lay Phillip Cross."\*

As an historical romance In The Valley fills a definite place in American literature.

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\* In The Valley, p. 378.

#### 4. The Return of The O'Mahony (1892)

While Seth's Brother's Wife, The Lawton Girl, and In The Valley constitute Frederic's best-known works during his years of experimentation, it is interesting and due his versatility to note that after he had published these three novels, two of which are realistic and all of which deal with New York, he traveled extensively in Europe, throughout Germany and Russia in particular, and wrote during the years 1891-92 three books--The Young Emperor William II of Germany (1891), The New Exodus: A Study of Israel in Russia (1892), and The Return of The O'Mahony (1892). Both The Young Emperor and The New Exodus are impressionistic history, the former being a readable, interesting, and impartial analysis of the character of William II of Germany, whom the contemporary reader remembers as the Kaiser of World War times; and the latter a picture and an illuminating and sympathetic description of the Jewish persecution in Russia, with all the horrors of the knout and confinement in the Pale. Though these histories show that Frederic's selective ability was good, his powers of analysis keen, they do not require special attention in this study.

Frederic's fourth novel, The Return of The O'Mahony, published in 1892, follows five years after his first effort.

If fiction existed in the eighties as Mr. Van Doren declares, largely for entertainment, Harold Frederic, not only in The

Return of The O'Mahony, but also in his works as a whole ostensibly retained the conception that the purpose of fiction is to entertain no matter how much he may have varied from the method of the old romance. As a consequence there are in The O'Mahony no obvious purpose, no issues, no great morals. Hence The O'Mahony pleases. If we should look into the pellucid stream of the narrative for verisimilitude, we should be impressed by the influence which the impostor O'Mahony exerts over the common people of Ireland. Nor should we overlook the tender affection in which the O'Mahony sponsors Kate. But these truths are not the conscious object of the book. The O'Mahony was written merely to please. The principal part of the story of The O'Mahony was laid in Muirisc, Ireland, with its castles, convents, mountains, and Fenians. Though in this realistic romance there are many of the paraphernalia of melodrama--hidden chambers, forgery, mistaken identity, great legacies, and revolution--Frederic discards the blocks of description and showers of tears common to the turgid style of the old romance and tells his story with the sprightly humor and wistful grace of a man who delights in entertainment.

As the Civil War is drawing to a close (in 1865), Zeke Tisdale, "father" of Company F in the \_\_\_\_\_th New York and a brave fighter of bad personal habits, takes from the pockets of one Andrew Linsky, a young Irishman who, Tisdale thinks, dies in an encounter at a vidette post, the papers which entitle Hugh



O'Mahony, another soldier whom Linsky seeks, to a great estate in Muirisc, Ireland. After the war Tisdale, with the papers, sails to Ireland as the O'Mahony. His democratic manner and his keen sense of justice soon win him the love of the Irish common people and of Kate O'Mahony, the little daughter of Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony, who as a widow has married the designing hereditary bard, Cormac O'Daly. The O'Mahony joins forces with the Fenians, an Irish organization for independence from England, and as a consequence of an unlucky encounter shortly abandons Muirisc, leaving his faithful slave Jerry Higgins and the designing O'Daly in charge of the estate. After twelve years he returns to be welcomed not only by the Irish people but also by Bernard O'Mahony, a young mining engineer from Michigan, who proves to be the only son of the rightful O'Mahony, now dead, and who of course, marries the beautiful Kate. But because of the respect in which the Irish people clothe Tisdale, Bernard refuses to accept the estate while The O'Mahony lives.

This, in short, is the plot of The Return of The O'Mahony, which is terse and compact throughout. But as has been noted repeatedly, it was character that delighted Harold Frederic. In The Return of The O'Mahony the only character worthy of consideration is Zeke Tisdale, the lovable impostor. Zeke is a typical, rough, but human and democratic American who feels at home in

surroundings which are precarious. He is a New York Yankee in an Irish court of customs, loved and respected because of his unaffected humility, his uncommon patience, and his unmatched generosity. To The O'Mahony all the other characters bow--and rightly, for The O'Mahony is a man whose acquaintance is both pleasant and valuable. It is he who makes the book worth reading.

### Chapter III

#### The Decided Turning to Realism

##### 1. The Copperhead (1893)

After five years of experimentation with both realism and romance, Frederic turned decidedly to realism and never afterwards deserted it. His first four novels having proved that he possessed the gift of a raconteur, he lent a vigorous pen in 1893 to the novelette, popularized in American during the eighties and early nineties, notably by Stockton. Frederic called his product The Copperhead. A cross-section of the social mind in northern New York during the time of the Civil War, The Copperhead shows a marked advance in Frederic's use of dramatic situations and of the actual. With the materials and background of romance, though without the usual plethora of incident, he presents a psychological study of the animosities and violent revenges of the Abolitionists and the Copperheads, as those who sympathized with the South were called in the Mohawk Valley. The story of The Copperhead shows strikingly how the wounds and injustices born of intolerance may be healed by the love of two young people whose minds are liberal. Jeff Beach and Esther Hagadorn are Romeo and Juliet, but without the tragedy.

Octavius, New York, or a farm twelve miles from it, is the scene of the story of The Copperhead. During the sixties the untraveled farmers of New York were an intolerant, revengeful people. They made their cheese and their barrels, but were strangers to reading and rational thinking. Swayed by feeling and prejudice, they often became impassioned against old friends, and it is by capitalizing these feelings that Frederic gives us The Copperhead, a vigorously realistic story told by a farm boy of twelve.

Abner Beech has always been a "good provider," a leader at the farmers' cheese factory, and "a great hand for reading." But when the Civil War opens, he opposes it. All the other farmers of the community are Abolitionists, and they call Abner a Copperhead.

Jeff Beech, twenty-one year old son to Abner, loves Esther Hagadorn, the daughter of "Jee" Hagadorn, a cooper and Abner Beech's arch enemy because "Jee" leads the neighborhood Abolitionists. Encouraged by Esther, Jeff enlists in the Northern army, and Abner disinherits him. After Jeff's departure the Abolitionists force Abner out of the church and away from the cheese factory, and when the latter celebrates the Abolitionist defeat at the township election, they plan to tar and feather him. As Esther Hagadorn warns Abner, the mob succeeds only in burning the roof over his

head. Abner moves to the farm. At this juncture young "Ni" Hagadorn, who went south after Jeff Beech when news of Jeff's being wounded reached the North, returns with the Copperhead's son, and though Jeff has lost one arm in the war, the Hagadorns and the Beeches are happy and are reconciled by the prospective marriage of Jeff and Esther.

As a story The Copperhead lacks distinction, for the plot is shallow and only slightly entertaining. But as a study of dogmatism of character, it elicits attention. The farmers of New York, with their little angularities and their great antipathies, are strongly drawn, true to life, and quite diverse in character. Abner Beech, proud, prejudiced, inflexible; Jehoida Hagadorn, who neglects his business to lead the Abolitionists--both these men make lasting impressions upon the reader. The Copperhead is an illuminating study of the social mind in New York during the Civil War.

## 2. Marsena and Other Stories of the War-Time (1894)

The success of The Copperhead brought forth a shower of short stories from Frederic's pen. Marsena is an account of the fate of Marsena Pulford, a much overdrawn and far too romantic photographer, and of Dwight Ransom, a young surveyor--lieutenant at Octavius, New York, in the hands of Julia Parmalee, a wealthy resident coquette at Octavius. She manages to send both Marsena and Dwight to the front during the Civil War, where, dying on the field, they awake to the irony of their position

and recognize that she cares for neither of them. In Marsena there is no obvious purpose nor deep thought, but vivid realistic pictures of the horrors of war abound. The plot is spare; there is no attempt at artistry; and the characters, especially Marsena, are too superficially romantic to be convincing in the situations in which they feature. If any character in Marsena speaks for the author, or in any way suggests the mild cynicism of Frederic, it is Schull, the ex-showman and Marsena's partner. When he says at the studio, "These big bugs with plenty o' money always have to be waited on. It ain't right, but it has to be,"\* one thinks again of Frederic's own comment at the opening of the story: "We had not learned in those primitive times (1860) to measure people by dollar mark standards."<sup>2</sup> But as sheer description of war Marsena reminds one of the World War pictures by Cobb.

"The Eve of The Fourth," the second story of the Marsena collection, lacking the purpose of Hawthorne, the humor of O'Henry, the elevation of the commonplace of De Maupassant, and the perplexity of Stockton, is still a crisp, racy, laconic narrative which commands attention. A typical representative

\*Marsena, p. 46.

2. Marsena, p. 4.

of Frederic's "kid-stories", told in the first person by the boy hero, it presents a superficial account of a Civil War time celebration of the Fourth of July.

It has climax--the "exaggerated report" of De Witt Hemmingway's death in battle--and anticlimax, the news that he is still alive. There is a surprise ending on the principle of Marjorie Daw, but no compression, no employment of suggestion and restraint. "The Eve of the Fourth" is just a simple narrative of war-time events.

After "The Eve of the Fourth" comes "The War Widow", another "kid-story" in the first person, but with a stronger theme. The theme of "The War Widow" is that one dead man is as good as another--that a private soldier deserves a burial equal to a major's.

This idea of equality Frederic suggested in Marsena, but the young army surgeon does not express it so boldly as does Serena Turnbull, the war widow. More pictures of New York farm life, more studies of the sturdy character that subdued our country from nature, more of parental pride and partiality, as shown by old Arphaxeel Turnbull's attitude toward his son Alva, more of feminine fortitude, as shown by Em in bearing without the sympathy of friends the news of her husband's death--these are what we get in "The War Widow", an interesting story

told in Frederic's straightforward, racy manner, with a sprinkling of wit.

The last story in the Marsena collection is "My Aunt Susan," an entertaining narrative of Civil War times in New York, with a good plot, suspense, suggestion, restraint, and a satisfying ending. It pictures the manners and customs of the period--its carpet rag bees, its looms, and its butchering. Told in the first person with a deal of humor, "My Aunt Susan" proves the old saying that love forgives all. It is a gripping character story with excellent direct and indirect characterization. Susan's "stern aloofness" from others casts a suspicion upon her which holds the reader's interest to the end.

Though all the stories of the Marsena collection are superficial pictures of cross-sections of the Civil War, yet they show some improvement in Frederic's ability to collect and present the detail of realism in such a way as never to lose sight of the importance of the mass which the detail explains.

### 3. Mrs. Albert Grundy (1896)

For two years after his collection of civil war stories Frederic published nothing. Then, in 1896, came Mrs. Albert Grundy, a lusty satire upon the prudery, the hypocrisy, and the sophistication of the so-called cultivated women in English



society. Frederic exposes the characteristic weakness of the modern society woman, but never asks why she is so or what the significant consequences of her weakness are. His study is photographic but superficial. Mrs. Albert Grundy herself is a type from English society, not an anomaly, and Frederic characterizes her for the most part indirectly. She is the English woman, with her insatiable ambition to climb socially and her patent-leather hypocrisy. All her foibles are peculiar to woman and to motherhood.

With such a satire in mind Frederic put very little meat into his story. Mrs. Albert Grundy of Fernbank, England, possesses a large fortune, three unmarried daughters, and insatiable social ambitions. She has reared her daughters to be, like herself, prudish and hypocritical. In their fine home at Fernbank Mrs. Albert Grundy and Uncle Dudley, Mrs. Albert's brother, live intellectually isolated from the female members. Both are regular "he-men" and cynical. Dudley is also delightfully witty. Tristram, a friend of these men, tells the story. Mrs. Grundy feigns an interest in art, frequents the London studios, cultivates the nobility--all for social aggrandisement. Incidentally, she seeks a wealthy husband for her eldest daughter, Ermyntrode. At length "Ermie" and the honorable Knobbeleigh Jones, son to the wealthy Lord Skillyduff, become engaged. But after Lord Skillyduff succeeds in taking the Grundy fortune, this

engagement is broken. The Grundys move to Clacton-on-the-Sea, but after six months are back at Fernbank with a new fortune. At this juncture Ermie prepares to marry Tristram, and Mrs. Albert hurries to get Christmas presents for the Gregorys so that Tristram and Ermie may spend their honeymoon at the Gregory country home!

The manner of Mrs. Albert Grundy, smacking as it does of intellectual audacity, sharp, racy, full of a farrago of wit and lambent mirth unequalled elsewhere by Frederic, makes up the deficiency of the plot, gives us an additional insight into Frederic's powers and versatility, and delights us.

#### 4. March Hares (1896)

In the year with Mrs. Albert Grundy Frederic wrote another short novel, employing his vigorous realistic method, and called it March Hares. Shortly after its publication he sent a copy of the story to the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), who was confined to his rooms following an accident. Harold Frederic wrote that he sent the book as something to relieve the monotony of staying indoors, and not with any desire for publicity; for it was not Frederic's practice to advertise. There came shortly a very nice note written by the Prince's secretary, Sir Frances Knollys, saying that the Prince of Wales was sure he would enjoy March Hares if he liked it as well as Harold Frederic's other books.\*

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\*Information by letter to the writer from Mrs. Kate Forman, owner of the March Hares copyright.

If the Prince of Wales read March Hares, he no doubt did enjoy it; for March Hares is light, simple entertainment. Written merely to please, it carries through its neat plot an old and well-known theme, the power of companionship. Companionship, after repeated discussions of sex, it defines as "a true communion of minds." This communion of minds, Frederic asserts, is the greatest force in human existence-- a thesis which George Eliot proved with different materials in Silas Marner.

March Hares, one of four novels by Frederic, which feature London as a background, evokes and holds attention by an interesting plot. A few striking descriptions of scene, some apt delineations of character, and a little arrant nonsense-- all these give March Hares tang and vivacity; but as the old appreciation of fiction has it, "the plot's the thing." David Mosscrop, finding no interest in life at thirty, walks to Westminster bridge in London with the thought of destroying himself. On the bridge he meets Vestalia Skinner, a penniless young blonde who is also contemplating death by water. Almost instantly the thoughts of suicide depart. Vestalia, with practiced mendacity, tells David a sympathy-compelling hard-luck story which draws from David a breakfast and a new pair of boots. David feigns criminality, but at a museum his knowledge of statuary so impresses a bystander that he offers

David a position as his daughter's tutor. In this position and with Vestalia David renews his interest in life, but Vestalia, awaking to the indiscretion of permitting a stranger to support her, leaves David's apartments and as a genealogist finds employment with a Mr. Skinner, who she proves is her uncle. After David finds her, she very willingly marries him.

Coupled with this entertaining plot are some interesting direct characterizations and a sprinkling of humor. David Mosscrop whose forward manner and flattering tongue combine to assure at least his own pleasure, and Vestalia Skinner, whose pride and boldness at times seem affected, sometimes speak badinage which provokes a smile; but frequently their conversation, packed with hyperboles, drags with what seem attempts to clear "the wilderness of academic pishposh." But in every detail March Hares is realistic.

In the four books just analyzed may be seen a marked advance in Frederic's use of realism and in the development of his art. More clever, more sure of his way, he goes deeper into the unpleasant and breaks through the wall of reserve erected by Howells during his realistic pioneering and the results, more vigorous verisimilitude and subtle compression, are highly gratifying.

## Chapter IV

### The Chief Realistic Products

#### 1. The Damnation of Theron Ware (1896)

With March Hares Harold Frederic's literary adolescence passed and gave way to some notably mature work. The first book of this mature period, The Damnation of Theron Ware, has already been referred to as Frederic's strongest work. It is, for two reasons, the best of what Frederic did. In the first place, it is the most serious, the most profound, of all the novels. It presents material of permanent value, a sense of values, and vigorous criticism of life. In the second place, it is most ingeniously conceived and carefully executed, especially in its earlier chapters. In accordance with Wilkie Collins' three injunctions, Frederic in Theron Ware makes us laugh, makes us weep, and makes us wait. Humor, sentiment, suspense--how effectively these qualities are blended. And how pleasing the result! A searching analysis of the life of the American bourgeoisie, The Damnation of Theron Ware is as much a criticism of life today as it was of the age which saw its appearance. Manners of speaking and styles of dress change with the seasons, but human nature remains the same. Education may crown the reason, but sovereignty abides with the passions. And so Theron Ware, dominated as he thinks by the intellect, is subtly misguided by instinct,

a force so strong that even religious prejudice cannot cope with it. The ethical aim of the book, though suppressed, is still obvious. That a young Methodist minister should be led astray by a beautiful Catholic girl is not good. On the other hand, such a circumstance, Frederic suggests, is neither tragic nor unforgivable.

Though Frederic had been ten years removed from America when he wrote Theron Ware, he comes back to his favorite haunt, New York, for a background. The damnation of Theron Ware occurs at Octavius, New York, a typical small American village, with its conservatism, its religious antipathies, and its intolerance. The plot, though definite, compact, and interesting to its climax, is incidental. The Reverend Theron Ware and his wife, Alice, come to Octavius, New York, to build up the Methodist Church. But the intolerance of the people and an insufficient salary discourage them. To make more money Theron plans to write a book, but he lacks a library. Attending an Irish laborer's "last rite," Theron meets the wealthy Catholic girl, Celia Madden, who introduces him to Father Forbes, of the Octavius Catholic Church. Father Forbes has a fine library; Celia red hair, vivacity, and beauty. Theron makes, as he believes, a friend of Father Forbes, and falls in love with Celia. Theron's trusting wife, Alice, accepts garden flowers from Levi Gorringer, the lawyer who holds a mortgage on the

Methodist Church and consequently serves as one of its three trustees. As Theron and Alice drift apart, Celia and Theron become intimate. Finally Theron, on the pretext of attending a conclave for the church, follows Celia to New York, where Celia tells him he is a bore, and then drops him ungraciously. Theron becomes ill, and Alice comes to nurse him. After his recovery Theron abandons the ministry and with Alice moves to Seattle, where he expects to become a great politician.

In this study it has been said repeatedly that Frederic's chief interest lay in character. Nowhere else in his works is this statement so effectively proved. The Damnation of Theron Ware is, first of all, a searching analysis of the content of a young man's heart and mind. Theron Ware's longing for sensual and intellectual freedom, his feeble fight against his inclinations, and his final humility--all these Frederic elaborates in detail.

Although his chief interest lay in the inner life of his hero, Frederic did not slight the physical appearance of his characters. Theron Ware himself, "the tall, slender...young man with the broad white brow, thoughtful eyes, and features moulded into that regularity of strength which used to characterize the American Senatorial type in those far-away days of clean-shaven faces and moderate incomes before the war,"\* leaves a lasting impression upon the memory. Good-natured, witty, optimistic, but conceited and weak-willed, Theron Ware makes a

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\*Theron Ware, p. 12.

likable and convincing though not at all admirable plaything for the bold and insincere Celia Madden. Celia, the fashionable young Irish Catholic girl with red hair, a lengthened oval face, luminous rose-tinted skin, full red lips, and big brown, frank eyes, ruled Theron as a queen. And he never dreams of her insincerity.

Alice Ware, the bright-faced, comely, and vivacious young woman who "knew how to dress", is merely a timid, dutiful, and trusting wife. Father Forbes, who secretly enjoys an affair with Celia, is a learned, beer-drinking priest of practical mendacity. Levi Gorringe, "the third trustee," though of questionable integrity, dares to be frank and open in all that he does. The other characters are incidental.

The Damnation of Theron Ware is too earnest in manner to radiate much of Frederic's ready humor, but it is told with a vigor, vividness, and penetration that are compelling. One does not have to read far to find in Frederic's vigorous realism passages which suggest a step toward the naturalistic tendencies of the truth--seekers who followed him. Here are a few Norris-like lines which, any careful reader will observe, transcend the delicacy and reserve by which the realism of Howells and his school is shackled:



"In the centre of the group were four working-men, bearing between them an extemporized littler of two poles and a blanket hastily secured across them with spikes. Most of what this litter held was covered by another blanket, rounded in coarse folds over a shapless bulk. From beneath its farther end protruded a big broom-like black beard, thrown upward at such an angle as to hide everything beyond to those in front. The tall young minister, stepping aside and standing tiptoe, could see sloping downward behind this hedge of beard a pinched and chalk-like face, with wide-open, staring eyes. Its lips, of a dull lilac hue, were moving ceaselessly, and made a dry, clicking sound."\*

This is but one of many passages which might be quoted to show that by the time Frederic came to Theron Ware he was a mature writer whose fondness for realistic details carried him toward the unpleasant, toward something of the sordid, toward the presentation of anything that was Truth--in a word, toward naturalism. And it is but one of many passages which prove that Theron Ware is his strongest and best piece of work.

## 2. The Deserter and Other Stories (1898)

For two years after the appearance of Theron Ware Harold Frederic published nothing. Then, in 1898, came The Deserter and Other Stories, fiction which finds its setting on the field of battle. The first two stories of the series

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\*Theron Ware, p. 61.

deal with the Civil War, but the latter two go back to the romantic days of brave knights and beautiful ladies. They are the only exceptions to the statement previously made that Frederic never deserted his favorite method of realism after finally adopting it during the early nineties. More than this, the two stories in The Deserter collection which follow the method of the rococo romancers prove conclusively that Harold Frederic's province was certainly not romance. For these stories, "How Dickon Came by His Name" and "Where Avon into Severn Flows," are wretched failures, difficult to read, lacking in compression, and carrying no conviction. They will be read only by the curiosity seekers.

On the other hand, the two realistic narratives, "The Deserter" and "A Day in the Wilderness," are not only interesting and convincing but well done. Frederic was always at home in New York--and in the period of the Civil War. A boy of ten at the close of the War, he gathered many strong impressions which he capitalized effectively in fiction.

"The Deserter," a strikingly dramatic and interesting narrative of American life in 1863, takes as its theme the thesis that adequate motives justify crime, that the duty of a son to his father transcends that which he owes his country, that Mose Whipple's desertion may be excused because his motive is to save his old father's life. In "The Deserter" Frederic employs all the tools of his art--suggestion, restraint,

dramatic foreshadowing, and suspense. And he succeeds admirably.

"A Dog in the Wilderness," though not so racy as "The Deserter," is still an illuminating documentation of the sordid scenes and practices of the Civil War. Like "The Deserter" and most of Frederic's short stories, "A Dog in the Wilderness" has a small boy hero, who is just a shade too clever for his age. It has no specific theme, unless the theme is that even in war a small boy may be a hero; but it suggests the general belief that virtue will be rewarded, as "Lafe" saves his cousin's life and is in turn given a home.

The third story of The Deserter collection, "How Dickon Came By His Name," breaks away from realism, as has been noted above, and delves into the old romance of knights and ladies in Britain. With Dickon, another small boy hero, it proves, like "A Day in the Wilderness," that virtue will be rewarded. For by the Tannenbaum Dickon saves Andraeas, the little German boy printer, and in consequence becomes, in later years, king. In a sixteenth century English setting this romance throws some light on the introduction of printing into England, but as a story it is too roccoco to carry conviction.

"Where Avon Into Severn Flows" is the last story of The Deserter collection. Another romance, lacking in lucidity and loaded with tiresome descriptions of burials, of dress, and of the splendors of War, it has a small boy hero and a

beautiful lady in disguise. But it is poorly written and is in no way convincing.

We may conclude, then, that while The Deserter contains two stories which indicate some development of Frederic's ability in handling the actual, the two romances in the same collection show that a momentary lapse into the manner of the rococo romancers proved fruitless.

### 3. Gloria Mundi (1898)

In the year with The Deserter Harold Frederic wrote his eighth novel, Gloria Mundi. It is a realistic account of British social life at the close of the nineteenth century, showing the sophistication and superficiality of the English nobility and how an individual reared in poverty and suddenly transported to great wealth hates class prejudices. As a criticism of life it is serious and convincing, but as a product of art it falls below The Damnation of Theron Ware. For it is hastily conceived, the loosely constructed plot being frequently padded with the activities of insignificant characters, and the major character, though well delineated, too feebly mediocre to leave strong impressions. In Gloria Mundi there are no great heights, no great depths--just an entertaining picture of the commonplace, with some philosophy but less of wit, and a background of English castles.

As the story opens, Christian Tower, the son of an English nobleman who had lived and died in France, travels toward England in response to a call from a member of his father's family. On the train at Rouen he meets Frances Baily, a young Englishwoman who has been to Paris on a vacation. Frances tells Christian that she knows the history of the Tower or Torr family in England and that she knows of Christian's being the most direct heir to the Duke of Glastonburg, who is about to die. This knowledge intrigues Christian, for he knew not why he had been called to England.

In London Christian and Frances part. Christian goes to Caermere Castle and soon becomes initiated into London society. The old duke dies; Christian takes charge of the estate; but the sophistication and the superficiality of his social life bore him. He goes out after love and decides at first to propose to Lady Cressage, a beautiful widow. Finally he recognizes his love for Frances, the girl of common birth, and she consents to become his wife.

Although there are more characters in Gloria Mundi than there are in most of Frederic's novels, there are none really worth close study. Christian Tower, the hero, is a sentimental weakling, whose generosity hardly obliterates a contradictory streak of selfishness. Frances Bailey, the proud, intelligent, independent common girl Christian marries, is the strongest character in the book. Lady Cressage,

beautiful in face, veered from one ideal to another. Edward and Augustine Torr are typical British "lounge lizards" or wilful parasites, hunting, drinking, and gambling out a commonplace existence. But all these characters combine to make the author's point--that English society is an empty coffer.

All in all, Gloria Mundi is just an entertaining narrative, full of beautiful pictures of background, presenting a sane criticism of life, but lacking the tang and vigor which characterizes Frederic's best work.

#### 4. The Market Place (1899)

Harold Frederic's last book, The Market Place, was published posthumously in 1899. It is a strong realistic novel of life in London on the board of trade. It carries the fortunes of a big, rough commoner through poverty to questionable opulence, and closes with a rant of philosophical speculation concerning happiness. It suggests that to be happy one must be interested in something--must be doing something. As a rich man, Stormant Thorpe, the middle-aged self-made master swindler and business autocrat, finds happiness in philanthropy combined with politics. To achieve power and then not use it, he avers, is the worst kind of degeneracy. To get power and to use it wisely--that is the

highest kind of good. Thorpe's wholesale thievery Frederic seems to excuse because in the end Thorpe decides to use his money to help the London poor. But even this intention Thorpe couples with a desire to rule England. It is still a means to his end--more power.

Thorpe corners the market on rubber consuls, steals 800,000 pounds, and is indirectly responsible for the death of an old geologist whom he had swindled; but his moral responsibility is never hinted at. In fact, Thorpe is so big and clever a swindler and gambler in stocks that we cease to accuse him and begin to admire his powers. But Celia Madden--the red-haired, cigarette-smoking young American who accentuates the damnation of Theron Ware--says at the close of the story with characteristic analysis, "I shall always insist that crime was his true vocation."

About the character of Stormont Thorpe, Frederic's strongest creation, Frederic built a compact and highly interesting plot. It opens with the London of 1890. Joel Thorpe, as Thorpe is known at the outset, is a clever, egotistical business man of forty who has just made a fortune by exploiting the stock of a fictitious rubber company in South America. With this fortune Thorpe hopes to get into English society. Lord Plowden, who had served as a figure head in Thorpe's exploitation, agrees for a specified sum to "bring

Thorpe out." The first step is a dinner at Plowden's country home. Here Thorpe meets Celia Madden and Lady Cressage, the widowed daughter of General Kervick, who serves as one of Thorpe's "directors." Thorpe falls in love with country life and also with Lady Cressage. After his return to London he visits his sister, Louisa Dabney, whose husband's death left her a poor bookshop and two children, Julia and Alfred, now twenty-one and twenty respectively. Thorpe takes Julia and Alfred and goes off on a four-month's tour of the Continent. In Switzerland he meets Lady Cressage, and they become intimate. Back in London, Thorpe leases a beautiful home in Ovington Square and keeps Julia and Alfred with him, but his sister refuses to join them. Shortly Tavenar, an old geologist whom Thorpe had swindled in connection with the exploitation of the rubber plantation, appears. Thorpe engages General Kervick to get Tavenar drunk and out of London. Kervick succeeds, and Tavenar is accidentally killed. His worries over, Thorpe now marries Lady Cressage and purchases a country estate. But the quiet life of the country bores him. He goes back into London to visit his sister. She suggests that he use his wealth to help the London poor. This suggestion pleases Thorpe immensely, for he sees in it the possibility of his becoming a great power in politics.

The only character in The Market Place who requires attention is, of course, Stormant Thorpe. A large, strong man,



with big, heavy hands, shrewd, egotistical, yet kind and generous, Thorpe makes an indelible impression upon the memory. Vulgar and unpolished at first, he labors assiduously to achieve his ambition--to be a country gentleman. And his wealth, instead of breaking his character, develops it, and gives him a broader and more charitable outlook upon life. Of all Harold Frederic's characters, Stowant Thorpe is perhaps the strongest and most admirable. It may be that he is the most like Harold Frederic himself.

Though on the whole The Market Place contains more of serious philosophy than any other novel by Frederic, still it shows no discernible advance over The Damnation of Theron Ware in the use of the realistic method. And this generalization applies with equal validity to the other work which Frederic did during the period of his maturity. By 1896 he had made in the use of realism a step in advance of his contemporaries. But he seems to have been satisfied with just a step.

## Chapter V

### Frederic's Art and Place as a Pioneer American

#### Realist

It will be noted upon a moment's reflection that in the preceding descriptions of Frederic's fourteen volumes very little comment was made upon his style or his art. It was the writer's purpose to comment upon Harold Frederic's style at the close of this study in a section such as the present one.

As a literary artist Harold Frederic has not been highly praised by the critics because, they assert, he accepted journalistic standards and worked hurriedly. While this criticism can be proved by quotations from Frederic's works, it is not the purpose of this study to justify any preconceived opinion. Rather the writer intends to examine Frederic's aims and purposes and to judge his achievements in the light of what he undertook to do.

A noted journalist taking up literary writing as a recreation, Harold Frederic wrote during the twelve years from 1887 to 1898 nine novels, three collections of short stories, and two volumes of history. Though once he skips over into Ireland, his real world in fiction are New York State and London; while travels in Germany and Russia provided materials for the histories. But his scope, his aims, were narrow compared with the aims of some of those who were

influenced by his writing--Norris, for example. One romance, In The Valley, he did write; but thereafter, excepting one or two minor stories already noted, he followed the realists, concentrating his attention upon character development and character contrasts.

In Seth's Brother's Wife he contrasts Seth's brother Albert, the strong, shrewd man of affairs, with Seth himself, a weak-willed dependant. In The Lawton Girl Jessica Lawton develops, after giving birth to an illegitimate son, into a really noble woman. The Return of the O'Mahony traces Zeke Tisdale, an American soldier of fortune, to Ireland, where his democracy and his generosity win the love of the common people. The Copperhead breaks the dogmatism of Abner Beech. Mrs. Albert Grundy satirizes the title character as a typical climber in English society. "Marsena" proves that a love-sick sentimentalist should fear feminine beauty. The Damnation of Theron Ware photographs a young minister's degeneration under the influence of a clever and wicked woman. And The Market Place, Frederic's last work, follows Stormant Thorpe, a big, rough, self-made man of business, through the London stock exchange to opulence and philanthropy. Character, character, character--that was Frederic's delight.

But Harold Frederic lacked great, serious purposes. He never inquires into the why of things, as does George Eliot. Nor does he undertake reforms, as do Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell.

Rarely does he pry below the surface of life to look at its meaning. Philosophy, the third prerequisite of a man of letters as set down by Stevenson, Harold Frederic has not. Neither is he concerned with religion and the supernatural. Outside his first efforts, Seth's Brother's Wife and The Lawton Girl, he is not concerned with ethics. He is a clear-sighted representative of this world only, looking, like Crawford, for entertainment but incidentally seeing what is wrong with life. Frederic finds his entertainment in the great outdoors, with its gardens, its forests, and its mountains, and in intensive studies of people--studies of individuals, of classes, and of nationalities. German and Irish farmers in Seth's Brother's Wife, English Tories and American Revolutionists in In The Valley, the New York state bourgeoisie in The Damnation of Theron Ware, and cultivated English society in Gloria Mundi serve to illustrate his interest in nationality.

With such aims in mind Harold Frederic is usually very careful in his selection of materials. Though his later novels are realistic to the point of naturalism, Frederic for the most part avoided the selection of the cheerless, the sordid, and the abnormal. Even his earlier war stories are spare in the presentation of ugly, uncouth truth. The unintelligible and the painful do not entertain him; hence he rejects them. Few of his characters move in backgrounds of ugliness, nor do they suffer hunger, either of the body or of the soul.

Never extreme, they are the common lot, with no overwhelming joys or sorrows, doing for our entertainment what ordinary passions and the requirements of a normal existence compel them to do.

Aiming primarily to entertain and incidentally, in a few books, to present a mild criticism of life, and selecting his materials from the everyday lives of ordinary people, Harold Frederic evokes our interest by his effective employment of means.

Like Defoe and George Eliot, Frederic is concrete, itemizing details with ease and effect, as these lines from Theron Ware show:

The garden parts had not been spaded up, but lay, a useless stretch of muddy earth, broken only by last year's cabbage stumps and the general litter of dead roots and vegetation. The door of the tenantless chicken coop hung wide open. Before it was a heap of ashes and cinders, soaked into grimy hardness by the spring rains, and nearer still an ancient chopping block, round which were scattered old weather-beaten hardwood knots which had defied the axe, parts of broken barrels and packing boxes, and a nameless debris of tin cans, clam-shells, and general rubbish. It was pleasanter to lift the eyes, and look across the neighbors' fences to the green, waving tops of the elms on the street beyond. How lofty and beautiful they were in the morning sunlight, and with what matchless charm came the song of the robins, freshly installed in their haunts among the new pale-green leaves! Above them, in the fresh scented air, glowed the great blue dome, radiant with light and the purification of spring.\*

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\*The Damnation of Theron Ware, p. 22.

Like Jane Austen, Frederic has a certain elegance and pleasant objectivity, as will be observed in "the last rite" quoted from Theron Ware in the first chapter of this study. Like Balzac, he is sometimes complex, making many elaborate divisions of his thought, as in Gloria Mundi, which he divides into five books. Like Howells and Scott, he is humorous. So general and pleasing is this quality that a series of examples will not be amiss:

"I was truly a remarkable object, with Aunt Susan's hand on my shoulder,"\*says the boy hero in "My Aunt Susan," surprised at his aunt's new born tenderness.

The boy narrator in The Copperhead, commenting upon the good-naturedness of Abner and M'rye Beech toward their daughter-in-law after the fire, says: "It seemed that we were all much happier in our minds, now that our house had been burned down over our heads."\*2

"It's just what Wendell Phillips said," declares Alice Ware in The Damnation of Theron Ware, "the Puritans' idea of hell is a place where everybody has to mind his own business."\*3

And in the same book Father Forbes, commenting to Theron Ware upon the demands placed upon him by his congregation, says:

\*"My Aunt Susan" in Marsena and Other Stories, p. 202.

\*2 The Copperhead, p. 145.

\*3 The Damnation of Theron Ware, p. 22.

"Why, only last winter, I was routed up after midnight, and brought off in the mud and pelting rain up one of the new streets on the hillside there, simply because a factory girl who was laced too tight had fainted at a dance. I slipped and fell into a puddle in the darkness, ruined a new overcoat, and got drenched to the skin; and when I arrived the girl had recovered and was dancing again, thirteen to the dozen."\*

But of all the books, Mrs. Albert Grundy brings the most smiles. Tristram's experiences as an Englishman in Germany are attended with much humor born of his unhappy translation of English idioms into the German. At one time he tries to send a telegram in which he says he will "paint the town red," but the literal-minded German officer retorts that such an act will be unlawful. Later Tristram hears that an American had a similar unhappy experience when, at the top of a mountain, he told his coachman "to make himself at home" -- "Machen Sie selbst zu Heim," whereupon the German, considering himself dismissed, took his horses and abandoned the mountain. About the same time in London Uncle Dudley shaves his upper lip, to the great surprise of the Grundy family. Upbraided for the act, he exclaims: "I did it myself; I did it with my little hatchet; I did it because I wanted to; I should do it again if the fit struck me!"\*2

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\*The Damnation of Theron Ware, p. 70.

\*2 Mrs. Albert Grundy, p. 183.

But unlike Dickens, Harold Frederic is rarely sentimental. Lacking the wit of Meredith, the irony and personal intrusions of Thackeray, the cynicism of Swift, he is secular, lucid, racy, intimate, and vigorous--all that makes a pleasing personality in literature.

The vigor with which Frederic wrote may be suggested by these words from the mouth of Abner Beech in The Copperhead:

"But no! darned if the coward (Otis Barnum) don't go and get his front teeth pulled, so 't he can't bite ca'tridges, an' jest stay around, a worse nuisance than ever!" I'd half forgive that miserable war if it---only took off the---the right men."\*

In The Market Place Stommant Thorpe says:

There is nothing else so big in the world as power--strength. If you have that you can get everything else. But if you have it and don't use it, then it rusts and decays on your hands. It's like a thoroughbred horse you can't keep it idle in the stable. If you don't exercise it, you lose it.\*2

And again:

"I could no more interest myself in all that stuff, making money, again than I could fly. That's the hell of it--to be interested in anything."\*

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\*The Copperhead, p. 152.

\*2 The Market Place, p. 270.

\*3 The Market Place, p. 350.



The elements of Harold Frederic's style are essentially journalistic--crisp, racy sentences; specific, action-suggesting verbs; and a plethora of hyphenated nouns and adjectives. His extensive vocabulary, rich in words of foreign origin, suggests a knowledge of the classics and much general erudition and experience. Frederic preserves a variety of sentence structure and writes with a swinging ease that delights us. Participial phrases and ellipses, such as may be observed in the following sentences, are characteristic of Frederic's vivid descriptive passages.

After stealing provisions private Linsky slips and falls:

Linsky, his eyes and mouth full of molasses, and understanding nothing at all of what had happened, found himself a moment later careening blindly and in hot haste down the open slope, the ham and the bag of meal under one arm, his gun in the other hand.\*

And now we see "Jee" Hagadorn denouncing McClellan as as traitor:

"He comes before me as I write--his thin form quivering with excitement, the red stubly hair standing up all around his drawn and livid face, his knuckles rapping out one fierce point after another on the candle-box, as he filled the hot little room with angry declamation."\*2

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\*The Return of the O'Mahony, p. 32.

\*2 The Copperhead, p. 96.

Such sentences, such illuminating details are common in Frederic's writing. As a model for his realism, Frederic, especially in his earlier works, followed Howells, ever avoiding the unpleasant, the sordid, and the sensational, and dressing his truths in the garb of ethics. But realism as he found it did not satisfy him. It did not go far enough in the presentation of truth. Consequently, in several of his later works--March Hares, The Damnation of Theron Ware, and the Deserter, to mention only the chief titles--we find a decided advance in Frederic's use of the actual and a tendency toward the presentation of the unpleasant and of even the sordid, provided only it were true. In this revolt from realism as he found it, which followed his reading of Zola and other French writers, Frederic doubtless influenced such younger Americans as Stephen Crane, with whom he was intimate, and Frank Norris. The seeds of the method of McTeague, for example, can be gathered from such vigorously realistic documents as Theron Ware and The Deserter. Following Frederic's lead, these younger men instituted a period in American fiction which, continued by such contemporary writers as Dreiser and Lewis, is commonly described as naturalistic. To make definite Frederic's step forward as a pioneer in realism, let us think of the history of the method as being divided into three periods. During the first period, in such novels as Barriers Burned Away by Roe, and to a less extent in Howells's

books, realism avoided the unpleasant and the sordid and made its way by trickery under the guise of being an uplifter, with something of an ethical intention. During the second period, in the late eighties and early nineties, realism generally became open, unethical photography, aiming merely at a true picture without purpose or apology. It is during this period that Harold Frederic leads the way. Frances Hodgson Burnett, Crawford, and Mrs. Deland did not take to the new method, and Norris and Crane were as yet young journalists. Harold Frederic set out virtually alone on the untried sea. That he made his way successfully, The Damnation of Theron Ware, one of the most vigorous and truthful books of the period, proves. And that his work influenced those who followed him, a comparison of Theron Ware (1896) with McTeague (1899) will establish. Hence Harold Frederic, though he does rank, as Professor Pattee says, "with Crane and Norris as a meteor of brilliance rather than a fixed light,"\* deserves recognition and a definite place as a transitional figure in American literature--as a trail-blazer for such naturalists as Dreiser, Anderson, and Lewis.

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\*Pattee, F.L. History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 401.

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